



IN RESPONSE TO ELLA LEI'S CALL TO REVIEW MANAGEMENT MECHANISMS FOR PUBLIC WORKS SUB-CONTRACTORS, GOV'T SAYS IT WILL CONDUCT 'IN DEPTH STUDY' AMONG SECTORS P3

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DOING BUSINESS IN CHINA IS GROWING TOUGHER, EUROPEAN BUSINESS GROUP SAYS P6



China A bus crashed into a tunnel wall on an expressway in northern China killing 14 people, state media said yesterday. 37 other people were injured in the Tuesday afternoon crash, state broadcaster CCTV said. The bus was carrying 51 passengers when it hit the wall on the Hohhot-Beihai Expressway in the city of Linfen in Shanxi province. There was no word on the cause of the accident, which CCTV said trapped passengers in the bus.

AP PHOTO



Vietnamese President Vo Van Thuong (pictured) resigned after a little over a year in the position, the Communist Party said last night, making him the latest senior official to leave office after likely being implicated in an intense anti-corruption campaign. The party said it had accepted his resignation, writing in a statement that "violations by Vo Van Thuong have left a bad mark on the reputation of the Communist party."

AP PHOTO



South Korea A chemical tanker capsized off an island in southwestern Japan yesterday, authorities said, killing eight people on board. One crew member survived, and the fate of two others was unknown. Officials said the tanker was carrying 980 tons of acrylic acid, a corrosive organic compound that is used in adhesives, paints and polishes. No leak has been detected, and officials are studying what environmental protection measures may be needed in case there is a leak.

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THE HOUSE RECOVERS

February visitors recover to almost pre-pandemic levels amid CNY P3



EVENTS
INTERNATIONAL PARADE VOWS TO OUTREACH ACROSS THE CITY



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FINANCE
PENSION FUND ASSETS GREW BY MOP5.7 BILLION IN 2023

P3

SI KA LON CALLS FOR HEALTH VOUCHER USE IN HENGQIN

Lawmaker Si Ka Lon calls for the acceptance of Macau Health Voucher in medical venues in Hengqin. Trying to explain the necessity, Si said that the government had promised to consider data linkages between local health centers and the center in Hengqin. He also raised the fact that Hengqin Hospital and the Macau University of Science and Technology Hospital are jointly operating a medical facility in Hengqin. Si says that the reason behind the proposal is that medicines approved in Macau and Hong Kong but not in mainland China are allowed in Hengqin with proven clinical needs.

MACAU'S QUEER FILM FESTIVAL TO SHOWCASE 14 FEATURES

The second annual Macau International Queer Film Festival (MIQFF) will feature 14 feature films and five short films from around the world. To be held at Lisboeta Macau's Emperor Cinema from tomorrow until April, the festival aims to showcase the multifaceted nature of the queer community. Information provided by MIQFF indicates that several of the films won awards at major film festivals last year, including Housekeeping for Beginners, a drama set in Macedonia's capital that won the Queer Lion trophy at the 2023 Venice Film Festival.

IAM CONCERNS WITH BIRD FLU IN SWEDEN, US

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) has expressed its concerns over reports of highly pathogenic avian flu in Svedala, Sweden and Hutchison, US, and pledged that bird products from the affected locations will not be allowed to be imported into Macau. When the IAM examines and approves import application documents, it will review the health certificate issued by the competent authority of the place of origin to prove that the product comes from an epidemic-free area and is suitable for human consumption. Otherwise, the local health and quarantine department will not be able to issue health certification documents for the relevant products.

A CASE OF SEVERE FLU LOGGED

An 80-year-old local woman with chronic illness is now under intensive care and on ventilator at the public Conde de São Januário Hospital, after being diagnosed with the flu and respiratory syncytial viral infection. She was treated for cough and shortness of breath by a private medical venue on Feb. 29, before being hospitalized at the private Kiang Wu Hospital on Mar. 11 due to shortness of breath. Five days later, she was admitted to the public hospital for kidney failure. On Mar. 18, she was transferred to the intensive care unit for respiratory failure.

INTERNATIONAL PARADE WITH OUTREACH PROGRAMS ACROSS THE CITY

RENATO MARQUES

THE 2024 Macao International Parade will happen on the streets of Macau this Sunday (March 24) and an additional outreach program will be held over the week, mostly on the weekend.

A total of 64 local groups and around 20 performing groups from different countries and regions will present a series of performances in the community. These performances started on March 17 and will continue until March 23 (Saturday), the day in which more events will take place.

The interactive exhibition "Confessing in Springtime" designed by the Three People Art and Literature Club is one of these extended activities and will be held from March 21 to 24 at Jorge Álvares Square from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Three performances of the "Dynamic Rhythm Wooden Dummy" are also expected to take place on Saturday (March 23) but this time at the Rotunda de Carlos da Maia (popularly known as Three Lamps). This performance combines Red Boat Wing Chun (Kung Fu) and the beats of gongs and drums in Cantonese opera and will be presented by Macau Wu Jun Fu Yueju Opera



Role Association.

On the same day, a Street Art Carnival will be held in the central district from St. Dominic's Square to Tap Seac Square from noontime until 4 p.m. This activity includes a parade procession composed by local and foreign art groups including Afuma, African Masks, Dodos, Little Comma Theater Company, Cal y Canto Teatro, Grande Cantagiro Barattoli, Macau Anglican College Primary Percussion Ensemble, MGRASSU, Odília Nunes,

Dulce Duca, and A La Fresca, and will showcase their skills and present a spectrum of performances including African stilt-walkers, colorful mask dances, bewitched dodo birds, Mulan gatecrashing, dolls in one orchestra, Oolong nannies, kite-flying, acrobatics on roller skates, miniature musical puppets, and musical flash mobs in anticipation of the full parade that will take place on the following day.

From 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. at Tap Seac Square, experienced pu-

ppet-maker Mike Troxel from Norway will also perform with his peculiar puppets while the Autin Dance Theatre from the United Kingdom will stage a performance that includes rolling a giant wheel.

VOTERS FOR AWARDEES, PHOTO CONTEST ENTRANTS INVITED

The festival will feature auxiliary, popular awards as well as a photography contest, for which public participation is invited, the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) said.

The IC elaborated that eight awards would be available for over 80 art groups participating in the Parade to compete for, including the "Most Popular", the "Most Energetic", the "Most Creative", and the "Best Performance", among others.

The photography contest, meanwhile, requires entrants to take the theme of the parade this year and feature shots of the performances, atmosphere, performers and events. The contest is open to all Macau residents aged 12 or above, and each participant can submit up to five photos before Apr. 8. The contest offers a Champion Award, a first Runner-Up Award, a second Runner-Up Award, and 15 Merit Awards.

CE reiterates further promotion of market integration within GBA

STAFF REPORTER



THE Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng reiterated the importance of actively promoting construction efforts within the Greater Bay Area and enhancing market integration within the area.

Speaking at the recent Spring Banquet of Guangdong Province 2024, Ho called for the joint partici-

pation of enterprises from Guangdong and Macau to foster international economic cooperation and competition.

Ho pledged that further efforts would be made to advance the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

He also stressed the im-

portance and significance of furthering Guangdong-Macao cooperation across a broader range of fields.

Meanwhile, Chief Executive and the Governor of Guangdong Province, Wang Weizhong,

said in his speech that throughout 2023, Guangdong and Macau had worked "together in unity, jointly promoting exchanges and cooperation in various fields."

"The development and opening-up of Hengqin accelerated, and the construction of the Greater Bay Area showed new vitality and a new outlook," he said.

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STATS

February visitors recovers to 93% pre-pandemic levels amid CNY

LYNZY VALLES

VISITOR arrivals soared by 106.7% year-on-year to 3,293,564 in February, recovering to 92.9% of the level recorded in the same month of 2019, according to data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC).

The increase in the number of arrivals occurred amid the Chinese New Year holidays when the city wrapped up the 10-day long holiday with 1.5 million people. Last year, these

holidays fell in the last week of January. The figure represents a rise of 15.1% month-on-month. Same-day visitors (1,867,660) and overnight visitors (1,425,904) leapt by 148.9% and 69.1% year-on-year respectively.

Also, international visitors totalled 176,192 in February, back to 71.6% of the figure in the corresponding month of 2019.

Macau has a budget of MOP235 million to attract more visitors from outside Greater

China in a bid to reduce the city's economic dependence on the mainland Chinese gaming market.

Regarding the Southeast Asian markets, the numbers of visitors from the Philippines (39,837) and Indonesia (12,471) exceeded February 2019 levels, rising by 26.2% and 3.2% respectively.

Numbers of visitors from Malaysia (12,265) and Thailand (8,973) returned to 91.7% and 92.9% of the corresponding levels in February 2019.

In relation to the Northeast Asian markets, numbers of visitors from Korea (41,844) and Japan (11,442) recovered to 48.6% and 52.6% of the respective levels recorded in the same month of 2019. In relation to long-haul markets, visitors from the USA (9,903) rebounded to 70.0% of the February 2019 level.

The government has held roadshows in different regions outside the mainland to promote the SAR's tourism offerings.

Meanwhile, visitors from mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan in February rebounded to 95.7%, 92.5% and 71.9% of the corresponding levels in the same month of 2019.

In the first two months of 2024, the number of visitor arrivals expanded by 105.8% year-on-year to 6.16 million

Pension Fund assets grew by MOP5.7 billion in 2023

RENATO MARQUES

THE local Civil Servants Pension Fund (FP) has recorded an increase of MOP5.7 billion in their total assets in 2023, according to the annual financial statements published yesterday in the government's official gazette.

According to the statement, at the end of 2022, the fund was worth some MOP26.14 billion. It earned approximately MOP5.70 billion during the year, closing 2023 with MOP31.84 billion.

A large contributor to the increased fund value was receipts from the fund investment plans, which generated some MOP31.81 billion in 2023; that is, MOP5.68 billion more than the previous year.

Among the investment plans that generated the best results were the Schroder ISF - Global Equity Alpha C and the iShares Developed World Index Fund (IE).



Also contributing to the outcome were other investment-related sources of income such as interest earned from bank deposits and other receipts that contributed over MOP16 million in total.

Contributions were also made by both individual accounts and Macau SAR accounts, with the former totaling MOP 776.8 million (+MOP16.4 million), and

the latter rising to around MOP1.554 billion (+MOP33 million).

The year also registered a slight increase in the number of contributors, i.e. Civil Servants who are part of the scheme (+77), who totaled some 23,955 in 2023.

Although the expenses also increased, the offset of expenses against income was not very significant.

ELLA LEI CALLS FOR REVIEW OF MANAGEMENT MECHANISMS FOR PUBLIC WORKS SUBCONTRACTORS

STAFF REPORTER

LAWMAKER Ella Lei previously called on the government to review management mechanisms for public works subcontractors. In response, the bureau responsible for such matters replied that it would carry out an "in depth study" where they would seek to identify the general consensus between different sectors.

In a written interpellation, the lawmaker warned of the negative effects of poor management of public works subcontractors and called on the government to impose measures to safeguard them.

However, in a brief reply following Lei's extensive request, the Public Works Bureau (DSOP) remarked that it had an "open attitude" and "when there is general consensus between the different sectors, a more

in-depth study will be carried out."

The lawmaker had reiterated to the government that when work is undertaken on a large-scale, it necessarily involves a large number of subcontractors.

This can "cause a problem of hierarchy between contractors and, if there is a lack of a good adjudication and supervision mechanisms, conflicts easily arise in relation to payment for the works such as due to delays and non-payment between subcontractors. This will affect the progress and quality of the works."

"Over time, many small and medium-sized companies in the construction sector have been complaining about imperfections in existing laws and mechanisms, as well as the lack of instructions and mechanisms defined by the government to ensure

payment for works," Lei stated.

"Subcontractors are often unable to receive money for works within the defined deadlines and even encounter situations in which they do not have the means to demand payment, which results in large losses, and these situations also occur frequently within the scope of public works," she added.

Lei has also questioned the government as to how it would improve situations to prevent the works from remaining unfinished and prevent the contractor from leaving after receiving the money.

Lei suggested the government require public works contractors to adopt the necessary measures to ensure that the works are carried out by subcontractors with professional capacity, experience and good reputations.

CASINOS' FOREIGNER EXCLUSIVE ZONES NOT POPULAR AMONGST GAMBLERS: HORNBUCKLE

STAFF REPORTER

THE introduction of private rooms was suggested by the Macau government, who encouraged casino operators to create foreigner-only gaming zones within their casinos to appeal to global clientele and compete with destinations like Las Vegas and Monte Carlo.

However, Bill Hornbuckle, the CEO and president of MGM Resorts, revealed that these foreigner-only gaming areas have not been well received by their intended audience, Inside Asian Gaming reports.

Instead of pursuing foreigner-only zones, MGM Resorts have opted to implement a program known as the "chip-in-chip program" to monitor the usage of every chip on the gaming floor.

Hornbuckle shared this insight during the J.P. Morgan Gaming, Lodging, Restaurant, and Leisure Management Access Forum last week.

Hornbuckle explained that this initiative has been in place for several years to ensure accurate tra-



cking of all the chips in circulation. He mentioned that one of the key benefits of this program was the elimination of errors in the game, as it provided clear visibility on

where labor should be allocated. Additionally, there were several other advantages on the back-end, including improved accounting and financial processes.

Regarding the foreigner-only gaming zone, which was introduced as part of the new gaming law enforced in early 2023 and which allowed casino operators to enjoy


a 5 percent levy exemption, Hornbuckle stated that some international gamblers were not attracted to the idea of being isolated in separate rooms.

To effectively track the activities applicable to this different tax bracket, the casino operators were required to create independent private rooms. However, customers did not appreciate being made to gamble in separate areas, which was seen particularly unfavorably by visitors from Thailand.

When the new policy was announced in 2022, Secretary for Justice and Administration Andre Cheong, also the spokesperson for the Executive Council, had already emphasized that foreign punters would have the opportunity to use a different type of gambling chip, signaling an attempt to accommodate their preferences.

Casino operators, as part of their licensing agreements, have also committed significant investments to reshape Macau's skyline and enhance its non-gambling amenities, aiming to transform it into a more universally appealing leisure destination.

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EDUCATION

1,600 LOCAL STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN THIS YEAR'S ENGLISH ESSAY CONTEST

STAFF REPORTER

THE award ceremony for the Macau-wide English Essay Competition (MEEC) took place at the Macao Science Centre and prizes were awarded to 61 young writers among 1,600 students from 47 local schools.

The competition, which aims to promote understanding of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals, is now in its third year. This year's theme, "Nature and Me," prompted participants aged 9 to 25 to explore the relationship between humanity and the natural environment. The essays were evaluated by a panel of judges through blind judging rounds.

Feng Du Wen from the University of Saint Joseph won first prize in the college category for his essay on economic growth and its impact on climate change. Other



first prize winners included Cheong Lok Ian from high school, Ho Tak In from middle school, and Lao Chi Tou from primary school.

The chair of the MEEC Organising Committee, Sandy Leong, praised the students' choice of topics, noting that they went beyond the typical subjects of nature, biodiversity, and animals to discuss economy, responsible consumption, and food. The event also

provided students with the opportunity to deliver speeches and discuss their compositions.

The prize giving ceremony, organized by the Macao Professional Speaking Association (MPSA) and two other local associations, was attended by various guests, including Leong Cheng I from the Cultural Affairs Bureau and Keith Buckley, the chairman of the British Chamber of Commerce.

CRIME

Drug dealer suspect arrested

ANTHONY LAM

A man has been arrested for allegedly selling illicit substances in Macau, the Judiciary Police (PJ) announced to a press briefing yesterday.

The man, aged 38 and a non-local worker from the Philippines, has been charged with the crime of illegal production and transactions involving narcotic and psychiatric drugs, the police added. It was also disclosed that the man works as a warehouse assistant at a local courier company.

Following intelligence, the police became aware that some drug traffickers would send illicit substances to Macau by mail. Under the assistance of the Macao Customs, the PJ managed to lock down a suspicious parcel.

In the evening on Mar. 19, the police saw the suspect collecting a parcel at the shop located in the Central district. Inspectors intercepted him and searched the parcel and found 30.7 grams of unprocessed cocaine.

The unprocessed narcotics were contained in three handbags for camouflage purposes.

Later in the operation, the inspector found 15.6 grams of methamphetamine in the suspect's residence in the Northern district. Apart from the narcotics, the inspectors also found tools for dividing the narcotics, a digital weighing scale and a stove believed to be used for extracting and refining the narcotics.



The narcotics found were worth about MOP400,000, the police said.

During interrogations, the suspect admitted to conducting drug processing and dealing, the police disclosed. He claimed that he followed instructions from those higher up in the hierarchy to collect the parcel. Refining the narcotics before selling them is also part of the set of instructions, the suspect further claimed.

The suspect also said that for each parcel collection, he would earn MOP500. Police disclosed that the suspect said he had only been performing these acts for two weeks.

Despite the confession, the suspect has declined to provide further details of the drug processing and dealing, such as the origin of the narcotics and his superintendents, the police said. However, the police were convinced that existing evidence is sufficient to press charges against him.

The police also explained that, after processing, raw cocaine can expand three to four times in weight.

FATAL TRAFFIC ACCIDENT

The Public Security Police Force (PSP) is seeking witnesses to a fatal traffic accident that took

place early yesterday morning in Ilha Verde District. The police received a report about the accident at 5 a.m.

At the location, a greening area, police officers saw a heavy motorcycle and a male motorcyclist. Upon arrival, police officers could not detect signs of life from the man, who is a local resident. Preliminary investigations suggested the man lost control of the motorcycle and crashed into the greening area.

To assist in investigations, the police are calling for witnesses to the accident. Any information can be directed to the Traffic Department of the PSP at 2837 4214.

F&B SECTOR REVENUES DECREASE 29% Y-O-Y

Revenues of restaurants & similar establishments and retailers showed a year-on-year decrease in January 2024 due to a high comparison base in the same month last year when the Lunar New Year, the period when business is usually brisk, took place. Meanwhile, sales of the interviewed retailers fell by 29.3% year-on-year in January; sales of Adults' Clothing Retailers, Watches, Clocks & Jewellery Retailers and Department Stores declined by 36.8%, 34.2% and 30.6% respectively, while sales of Motor Vehicle Retailers grew by 37.3%. Restaurants & similar establishments expected their revenues to increase month-on-month on account of the Lunar New Year, according to a survey conducted by the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC).

FSS REMINDS PEOPLE TO COMPLETE 'PROOF OF LIFE'

The Social Security Fund (FSS) is reminding people who need to complete their yearly "Proof of Life" to do so as soon as possible. FSS noted that, according to their records, some 4,000 out of 159,000 beneficiaries of old-age or disability pensions, have not completed their proof of life yet. The deadline to complete such a procedure is the end of this month (March 31). FSS also reminds beneficiaries that they may complete the "Proof of Life" without having to go in person to one of 50 locations across Macau that have installed self-service machines or go to the FSS. Instead, they may complete it using electronic methods such as the Macao One Account.

2024MIECF

Green Forum to discuss carbon neutral urban development

THE Green Forum at this year's Macau International Environmental Cooperation Forum and Exhibition (MIECF) will revolve around carbon neutral urban development, the government announced in a statement.

"This edition of the Green Forum will focus on important international environmental issues," the government underlined. "It aims to contribute suggestions and proposals for how green and low-carbon social development policies might be achieved."

At Session 3, titled Creating a Plan for a Carbon Neutral City to Combat Climate Change, there will be discussions on the im-

plementation of carbon peaking and carbon neutrality, which has become a widely-discussed and debated topic at an international level in recent years. It is also a key matter in the promotion and development of China's socioeconomic and environmental sectors.

Among other speakers, the session will see speeches and opinions from Cui Dandan, associate counsellor of the Department of International Cooperation of the Ministry of Ecology and Environment of the People's Republic of China, and Isabella Huang Loh, president of the Singapore Environment Council. The session will be held on the morning of Mar. 29 in the

Sicily Meeting Room of the Venetian Macao.

Speakers will address topics such as "Towards a Green and Low-Carbon Urban Future, in Synergy with High-Quality Cooperation under the Belt-and-Road Initiative", "Deepening Cooperation between Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau in Ecological and Environmental Protection to Build a Great World-Class Beautiful Bay", "Observing Green and Low-Carbon Urban Development from a National Pilot City", and "Green Cities of Portugal: Lisbon & Guimarães - Examples of Carbon Neutrality for Climate Action", the government further explained. AL



REPORT

DOING BUSINESS IN CHINA IS GROWING TOUGHER, EUROPEAN BUSINESS GROUP SAYS

ELAINE KURTENBACH
& KEN MORITSUGU, BEIJING

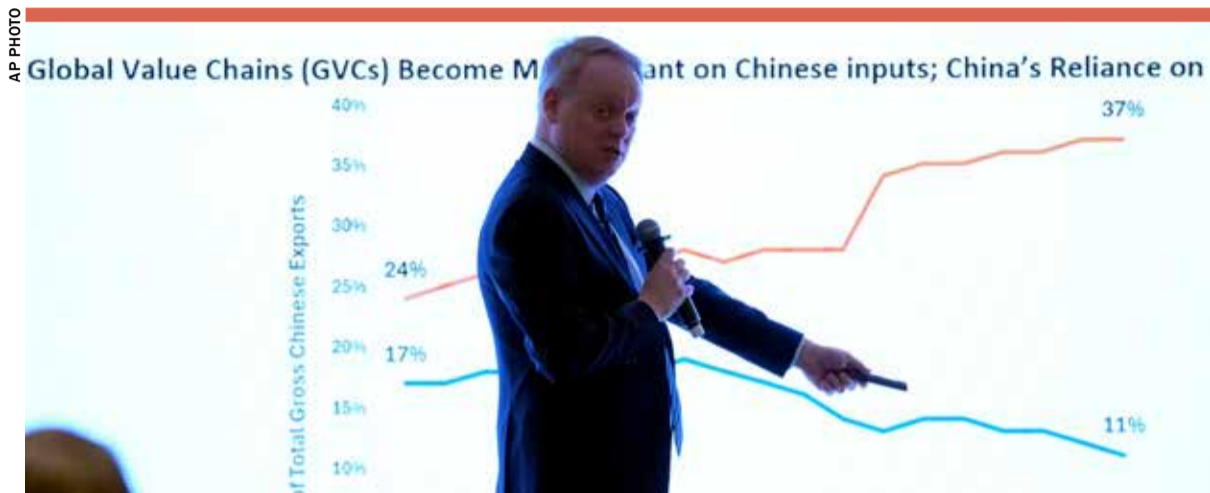
UNCERTAINTY and “draconian regulations” have drastically raised risks for foreign businesses in China, a report by a European business group said yesterday.

The lengthy paper by the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China urges China's leaders to do more to address concerns that it says have “grown exponentially” in recent years.

“This report comes at a time when the global business environment is becoming increasingly politicized, and companies are having to make some very tough decisions about how, or in some cases if, they can continue to engage with the Chinese market,” it says.

The study, compiled by the chamber and the China Macro Group consultancy, echoes concerns that have been raised by European and American companies operating in China. Foreign investment fell 8% last year from a year earlier as companies recalibrated their commitments in the world's second largest economy.

EU Chamber officials said China's changing business environment partly reflects moves by Beijing to minimize risks due to trade friction and dependence on imports of key commodities or industrial products. That's especially the case given trade friction with Washington and discussions about “decoupling” supply chains from China after the disruptions that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic.



President of the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China Jens Eskelund speaks during a press conference for European Chamber in Beijing, yesterday

But they said European companies also must manage their own risks.

China has sought to emphasize its openness to foreign companies and investment. Its commerce ministry spokesperson said the country was working to ensure 100% access to manufacturing by eliminating remaining trade barriers.

On Tuesday, the State Council, China's Cabinet, issued an updated version of an action plan announced in July to promote more foreign investment, especially in high-tech areas favored for growth such as computer chips, biopharmaceuticals and advanced equipment. It promised tariff exemptions and called for stopping practices that discriminate against foreign companies.

But other actions have run counter to that spirit of openness. Raids on foreign businesses in China, unclear state secrets laws and tightening rules on handling of data “have generated unease

among many foreign business people in the country.”

“The number and severity of risks companies find themselves having to navigate has grown exponentially in recent years,” Jens Eskelund, president of the European Chamber in China, told reporters in a briefing before the report's release.

At the same time, Beijing has not addressed many of the issues raised by foreign businesses, among them access to government procurement contracts, which are vital given the huge role of state-owned companies in the economy.

It's particularly difficult for medical equipment companies and research and development. Meanwhile, pharmaceutical companies are “quite alarmed by data security regulations that make clinical trials impossible,” said Markus Herrmann Chen, co-founder and managing director of the China Macro Group.

“We are still the odd guys out,

and this needs to change,” Herrmann Chen said.

Part of the challenge results from China's increased focus on national security in terms of reliance on technologies vital to its own industries. In part, such strategies are driven by U.S. moves to cut off business with Huawei Technologies and to prevent sales of leading edge computer chips and the equipment needed to make them.

American companies have expressed similar concerns. Sean Stein, the chair of the American Chamber of Commerce in China, said recently that China has made progress in addressing some issues but not others.

“The business community would like both sides to be much more clear about the definitions of national security and how it's determined,” he said in an interview before an annual chamber banquet with Chinese officials. “Because what we need is ... predictability, and we need certainty.”

One sore point for European business: a Chinese announcement of plans for anti-dumping investigations into three French brandy producers: E. Remy Martin & Co., Martell & Co. and Societe Jas Hennessy & Co.

“It's hard to see how 300 euro (\$330) bottles of XO can be accused of dumping,” Eskelund said.

For its part, China is unhappy with an ongoing European Union investigation into subsidies for electric vehicles in China and whether they have given Chinese makers an unfair advantage in European markets.

Meanwhile, with regard to cybersecurity, Eskelund said “we've seen some very draconian new regulations being published in China.”

He said Europe's approach to trade and investment issues was “targeted, very limited and very focused on eliminating ‘critical dependencies,’” not at competing with China. But companies still must hedge against risks or potentially be blindsided by policy shifts.

At the same time, companies also face risks in cutting back and must bring their “best game” to China, while others feel too exposed, especially after the shocks of the pandemic, when entire cities were ordered into lockdown and factories suspended production at times.

China's market has become “less predictable, reliable and efficient,” the report says, partly because the business environment is more politicized.

Eskelund called on China to restore predictability to the regulatory environment. **MDT/AP**

CORPORATE BITS

Melco extends energy conservation training to SME suppliers



With the aim of equipping its SME partners to remain competitive and achieve scale in an increasingly evolving business environment, over 30 representatives from nearly 20 local SME bu-

sinesses were recently invited to a learning workshop on the topic of energy conservation at Melco SME Academy.

The training offered seminars on Melco's energy

saving initiatives and carbon reduction efforts, and the latest developments in circular economy.

The event also offered a business networking session for representatives from local SMEs and Melco to meet with one another to better understand mutual business requirements and offerings as well as identifying opportunities for collaboration.

Established in 2017, Melco SME Academy helps local businesses succeed by providing access to the latest industry trends and training and technical knowledge, better equipping businesses to face evolving challenges.

Mastercard expanding its cross-border payment



Mastercard has expanded its cross-border payment solutions with a new connection to Alipay, the Chinese mainland's leading digital open platform under Ant Group.

The move comes as con-

sumers increasingly look for ways to send money across the globe quickly and securely.

Insights from Mastercard's Borderless Payments Report reveal that 68% of con-

sumers would make more online cross-border payments if they were faster.

Dennis Chang, Division president, Greater China, Mastercard, said: “China is already one of the largest recipient countries worldwide for international remittances. As global economic activities continue to recover, demand for cross-border payments will only increase. With this new connection, Mastercard is pleased to expand its partnership with Alipay to enable people around the world to easily make international fund transfers to the Chinese mainland in near real-time, simplifying the transaction for senders as well as receivers.”

CHINA-AUSTRALIA

Highest level meeting since 2017 as relations thaw further

KEIRAN SMITH, SYDNEY

AUSTRALIA received its most senior Chinese leadership visit in nearly seven years yesterday with stability a key theme of the discussions between the countries' foreign ministers.

China's Wang Yi met with his counterpart Penny Wong in Canberra on his tour of Australia and New Zealand. It was the highest level meeting in Australia between the nations since 2017 and comes as relations continue to thaw after a tumultuous period under Australia's former government in which trade measures were imposed on a raft of Australian products and security tensions were escalating around the region.

"A stable relationship between Australia and China doesn't just happen, it needs ongoing work," Wong said at a news conference after the meeting. And this was the latest meeting in that process."



Foreign Minister Wang Yi meets with Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs Penny Wong at Parliament House in Canberra

Wong acknowledged important differences remained between the countries, but work to uphold their common interests would continue. "Australia will always be Australia and China will always be China. However, we

will cooperate where we can but disagree where we must and to manage these differences wisely," she said.

Among the differences raised yesterday was the case of detained Australian Yang Hengjun,

who was found guilty of espionage in a closed trial and sentenced to death with a two-year reprieve in February.

Wong said Australians were shocked by the sentence and the government would not "walk away from our advocacy for Doctor Yang."

Also discussed was the removal of the last trade tariffs — on wine, rock lobster and some abattoirs — that China imposed in 2020 during the most recent nadir in the bilateral relationship that has cost the Australian economy an estimated 20 billion Australian dollars (\$13 billion).

"We're very proud of our wine and our lobster and our beef and we think Chinese consumers would benefit from all of those products having access to the Chinese market without any impediments," Wong said. "We think it's in both countries' interests."

Earlier, Wang said Australia and China could learn from their past tensions.

"The past twists and turns over the decade leave us with lessons to draw on as well as valuable experience," he said before his meeting with Wong. "Relations are now on the right track, so we shouldn't hesitate, we shouldn't let it veer off course and shouldn't go backwards."

Outside the Chinese Embassy in Canberra, dozens of protesters cloaked in Tibetan and Uyghur flags protested Wang's visit and urged the Australian government not to overlook the human rights situation in China.

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation reported that police removed several people who tried to get inside the diplomatic compound.

Wang is the most senior Chinese official to visit Australia since then-Premier Li Keqiang met with then-Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull in 2017.

Plans for current Chinese Premier Li Qiang to visit Australia were "on track," according to both foreign ministers. It is expected in mid-2024.

Wang briefly met Prime Minister Anthony Albanese before travelling to Sydney for further meetings.

In New Zealand, Wang met counterpart Winston Peters, Prime Minister Christopher Luxon and the country's trade minister. MDT/AP

AD

Tickets will be on sale through the Macau Ticketing Network outlets, telephone and online booking from 10am on 23 March (Saturday)

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BRIEFS



HONG KONG WOMEN PRESSURED INTO FORCED MARRIAGES

In Hong Kong, a heart-wrenching scenario unfolds as ethnic minority women, born or raised in the city, narrate their experiences of being pressured into forced marriages. A recent report by the Zubin Foundation, released last week ahead of International Women's Day, sheds light on this distressing issue, highlighting the plight of 11 women coerced into matrimony against their will. These women, interviewed by accredited mediator Sala Sihombing, shared harrowing tales of psychological pressure, verbal, and even physical abuse. The report underscores the gendered nature of forced marriages, often starting from a young age with some victims married off as children. The foundation's CEO, Shalini Mahtani, emphasizes the need for awareness and support for those trapped in such dire circumstances, advocating for societal and legal interventions to protect vulnerable individuals.



MACAU AND SHENZHEN STRENGTHEN LEGAL TIES

Macau's Director of Legal Affairs Services, Leong Weng In, and Shenzhen's Justice Department Head, Jiang Xiaowen, have signed a Memorandum of Legal Cooperation, fostering closer legal relations between the two regions. This agreement builds on a 2019 legal cooperation deal, aiming to facilitate legal information exchange, mutual legal support, and the integration of Macau's legal professionals into the Greater Bay Area's legal system. The initiative is set to enhance cross-border legal collaboration, contributing to the comprehensive development of the region. The memorandum promotes the alignment of legal systems and mechanisms, further integrating Macau into the national development framework and the ambitious project of the GBA.



NEW UNDERSEA TUNNEL SETS RECORD IN CHINA

China completed the Zhanjiang Bay Undersea Tunnel, the country's longest single-headed undersea high-speed railway shield tunnel. Spanning 9,640 meters, including a 7,551-meter shield section, this engineering marvel is part of the Guangzhou-Zhanjiang High-speed Railway. Constructed over 33 months, the tunnel showcases China's advanced capabilities in high-speed railway infrastructure. The tunnel's design prioritizes environmental conservation and resilience against typhoons, ensuring the safety and efficiency of rail operations. Expected to significantly reduce travel time between Guangzhou and Zhanjiang, the project enhances connectivity within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area aiming to boost regional development.

GBA, INCENTIVES AND RE

ANALYSIS BY LEANDA LEE*

HUMANS can be odd. There is a whole range of theories about what motivates individuals and groups to act in certain ways. One would reckon a few theories would suffice but incentives come in many forms and the way we value the outcomes is determined by a range of group norms, cultural factors and value-laden concerns and preferences specific to individuals.

In the late 90s, it was fashionable in human resources to provide flexi-hours. This was nothing like working from home during and since Covid-19, but then the technology was not available to support such work or for the monitoring and measurement of on-line productivity. One of the largest retailers on earth had implemented core working hours from 10am to 3pm at their head office during which time everyone was to be in the workplace. Beyond those hours, provided staff were at work 8 hours a day, they could come and go freely. It was a dismal failure. Employees were still turning up to work at 7am or leaving way after 7pm, not taking advantage of the program regardless of the pressures they had said they felt from a lack of work-life balance.

We sent a team in to investigate. Staff said they gratefully perceived the organizational support, but two big hurdles gradually revealed themselves. Some senior managers regularly worked until very late and would have conversations with their staff at that time which anecdotally led to desirable projects and promotions being allocated to the sta-



AI-generated illustration represents

ff who stayed back. Then, there was the car park. Some of it was under cover and sealed, other spaces a long walk away were graveled - dusty on hot days or muddy on rainy ones. The early risers got the good parking spots; pure logistics (and maybe high heels!) brought people to work early. Authorities might believe they put valid incentives in place, but there are hidden hurdles.

Guangdong expects job market stab

ON THE AGENDA

IN Guangdong province, a vibrant job market is anticipated this year, buoyed by a resurgence in overseas orders and a growing demand for labor in manufacturing and cross-border e-commerce sectors. This optimistic outlook was shared by companies and local officials at an employment fair, as reported yesterday by China Daily.

Zhuhai Gree Electric Enterprise Ltd, a key subsidiary of the appliance giant Gree Electric Appliances Inc., has seen a 10-20% increase in production in recent months. The company, located in Zhuhai, Guangdong, is on a hiring spree, looking to add over 100 new members to its workforce, according to a human resources manager named Wu. With positions like equipment operators and technicians on offer, the company promises competitive salaries between 5,500 to 7,000 yuan and free accommodation.

The job fair, which took



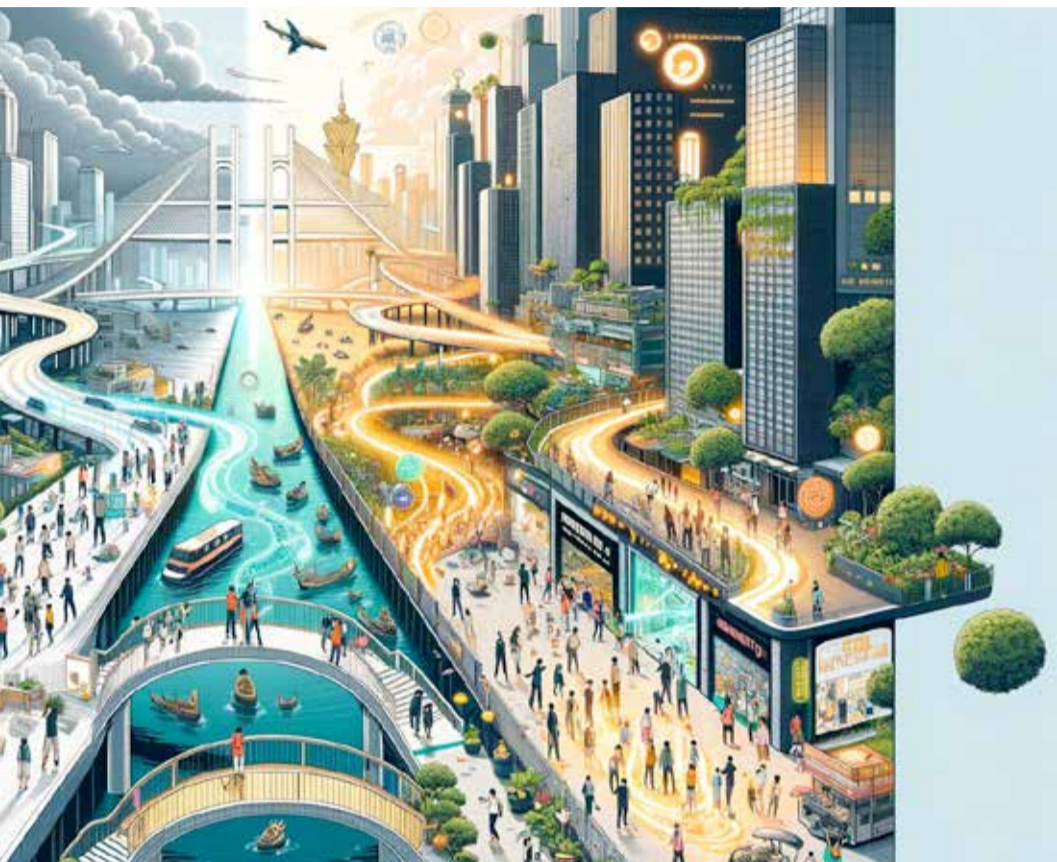
place in Guangzhou, and the manufacturing hub Dongguan, showcased over 70,000 job opportunities from 1,300 companies. Over 400 manufacturing firms participated, offering a plethora of technical roles that constituted around 45% of the jobs available.

Guangdong Xinbao Electrical Appliances Holdings Co Ltd, another prominent participant, expressed a strong

demand for workers due to a solid order book in the first quarter. The Foshan-based company plans to hire 50-60 people for various technical and managerial positions.

Guangzhou Mino Equipment Co Ltd, a leader in intelligent manufacturing solutions for the automotive sector, anticipates a 50% surge in output value this year, resulting in a need for 160 to

REMOVAL OF OBSTACLES



Examining the incentives and obstacles in the context of Macau and the Greater Bay Area

Macau residents and businesses have been known to have a lackluster response to opportunities made available in Hengqin. There are lessons here for integration into the Greater Bay Area. Not all great ideas are great for everyone. There are the enticements, and eventually stronger directives, but between these lie an appreciation for existing structural hurdles to achieve desi-

red outcomes. This is where we currently appear to be moving in the incentivization of people towards GBA integration.

There is a news article on the Social Security Fund website reported upon in The Times which suggests that while residents are encouraged to study, work, run businesses and live in other areas of the GBA, there was a structural disincentive in pla-

ce against Macau residents moving to the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth cooperation zone in Hengqin. Regulations stipulate that residents need to be in Macau for at least 183 days a year to access their rights and interests under the two-tier social security system. From 1 March 2023, upon application, time in the Hengqin Cooperation Zone can be deemed to be time in Macau for these purposes. Another hurdle removed.

In another realm, obstacles to the development of Macau's telecommunications industry as part of the GBA integration policy were raised by Rui Marcelo, Vice President, General Assembly – Macau Communications Development Association, in these pages last week. He said the adoption of new ICT legislation would create certainties which would encourage investment in infrastructure such as high-capacity fixed networks, fair competition, security and safeguards for both industry and users around how new technologies can be implemented. This would help create an active and innovative hub.

Uncertainty slows innovation and development, unless the returns by far outweigh the risks as seen in the gaming industry, but that is not the normal state of play. Local authorities will need to ensure key development industries are offered a clear runway with obstacles removed and not just the promise of blue skies. Structural and institutional certainty and a clarity of vision will help clear the way for new investors and SME entrepreneurs alike.

The recent announcements at the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference for continued consultations, discussions, exploration and recommendations for economic and social development of the GBA are cri-

tical promises that we will eventually experience integrative mechanisms. Removal of physical barriers and ease of travel, however, between Macau, Hengqin and other areas in the GBA is a base level of convenience required for human interaction, social and community development and business coordination, not to mention access to larger markets for businesses on all sides. Mobility of goods and services, human movement and interaction are all tangible signs to the population that integration is happening, that it has momentum and is coming to fruition. Each time another permit scheme is implemented these messages are bolstered and confidence improves. Examples can be found in the recent northbound travel program for private Hong Kong vehicles, and the seamless integration between Macau and Hengqin's Intensive Cooperation Zone recently strengthened by the tax-free status of goods from Macau. The inclusion of parcels and luggage in this mix speaks to the goals of normalization of life for Macau residents relocating there: more incentives for real people without barriers.

Impediments will continue to come to light. For instance, not all Macau residents are yet equal under these schemes. This might result in Macau employers hesitating when hiring for cross-border enterprises as the pool of skilled labour they can hire from will be restricted to a subset of the local workforce. Employers may be inadvertently forced to discriminate against those Macau residents not offered full and equal access to the GBA. Systems' change is complex but with careful monitoring these and other impediments will be ironed out before inequities and unintended consequences become entrenched.

*Contributing editor and scholar

ility this year

INTERVIEW

In a detailed interview conducted by the Lusa News Agency, economic affairs expert on China, Christiane Prange, made a striking assertion regarding the shifting dynamics within the Chinese economy. She claims that China's economy "is becoming much more influenced by politics," urging foreign companies within the country to pay close attention to geopolitical and national security issues.

"Nowadays, companies venturing into China need to be aware that the economy is becoming significantly more influenced by politics," Prange emphasized, pointing to the speeches of President Xi Jinping, who has been announcing "most of his steps" himself. This observation underlines the increasing intertwining of economic strategies with political agendas under Xi's leadership.

Prange, the author of "Xiconomics: What China's Dual Circulation Strategy Means for Global Business,"

CHRISTIANE PRANGE

China's economy 'is becoming much more influenced by politics'

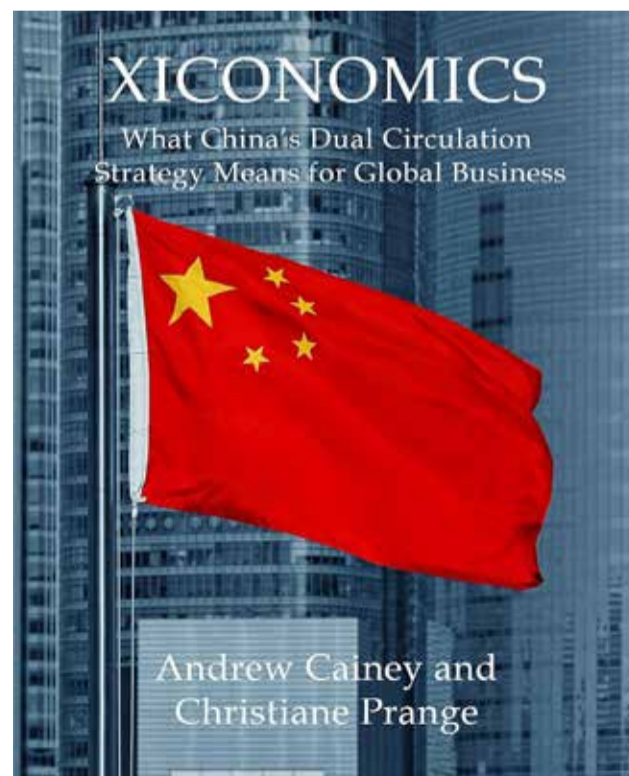
presented recently in Lisbon at the Macau Cultural and Scientific Center, noted a significant shift in the business landscape. She stated, "Doing business today will be impossible if one tries to ignore geopolitics, which is perhaps the biggest change." She further highlighted the growing importance of national security concerns in business strategy, compared to the past.

For foreign investors, Prange recommends establishing networking within China and diversifying value chains as "the legal situation regarding information transfer has become much more critical." This advice points to the increasingly complex legal environment foreign companies must navigate in China.

"The uncertainty is

increasing, ambiguity is increasing, and most Western companies need to be much more agile and quick to survive in the market," Prange stressed, underscoring the challenges Western companies face in adapting to the rapidly evolving Chinese market.

Throughout the interview with Lusa, Prange described the evolution of doing business in China. It has shifted from bringing knowledge and "helping the country grow," to a phase of "better understanding the culture to be able to establish connections." However, Prange asserts that it's not just about the culture anymore; understanding the historical development leading to the current geopolitical situation is crucial. "To understand (President) Xi Jinping, in my opinion, one needs



to look back in history," she argues, indicating the importance of considering the historical context of both

Xi Jinping and the broader landscape of the Chinese Communist Party and the country itself. **MDT/LUSA**

AP PHOTO



Khenpo Paljor, a Tibetan lama from Des Moines, Iowa, leads a prayer at the Birthplace of Antioch marker

ASIAN AMERICANS

BUDDHISTS USE KARMIC HEALING AGAINST ANTI-ASIAN LEGACY AND NATIONWIDE PREJUDICE TODAY

DEEPA BHARATH AND TERRY TANG, ANTIOCH

FOR one afternoon, on Antioch's main street and tranquil riverbank, the fragrance of burning incense was paired with the sound of Buddhist and Tao chants. Their cumulative calming energy was meant to be a balm of sorts to soothe the racial and religious hate that cast a shadow on Antioch's legacy.

Antioch's dark past, specifically its horrific mistreatment of early Chinese immigrants, motivated about 200 Buddhists to undertake a recent pilgrimage to the city of about 115,000, tucked deep in the delta that drains into the San Francisco Bay. Their goal was to supplant the negative with the positive by reconciling a dreadful past and anxiety-filled present — both time periods when Asian Americans nationwide have faced hate and discrimination — with the hope for a more egalitarian and harmonious future.

In the 1800s, thousands of Chinese immigrants came to the area during the gold rush to work in mines, and build railroads and levees. Those who lived in Antioch were subject to sundown laws and used secret tunnels to commute to and from work, according to local newspaper reports. Eventually, the city's Chinatown spanning a couple of city blocks — which also housed a Buddhist/Tao temple where new immigrants congrega-

ted — was burned down.

On Saturday, the group of Buddhists gathered for the pilgrimage, an event they titled "May We Gather." It was intentionally scheduled on the third anniversary of the Atlanta mass shooting when a white gunman targeted female employees at Asian American massage parlors because he saw them as "sources of temptation." Six of the eight victims were women of Asian descent.

Duncan Williams, a Soto Zen priest of Japanese descent and one of the event's organizers, said the Atlanta killings bore eerie similarity to Antioch in 1876 when raging locals burned down the homes of Chinese women branded as sex workers. In 2021, Antioch became the first U.S. city to issue a public apology for the mistreatment of early Chinese immigrants during the gold rush.

Williams, who also is a religion professor at the University of Southern California, said event organizers desired not just a political reaction, but "a Buddhist response that draws on our teachings and practice," which aims to honor ancestors and heal racial trauma, past and present.

So in Antioch's El Campanil Theatre, a gathering of Buddhist monks and leaders from across the diaspora engaged in a process of "karmic healing." They offered chants and prayers at the altar of the thousand-armed Guan Yin, the goddess of mercy and com-

passion. Four tablets rested at the altar bearing the names of victims of hate and violence.

The Buddhists in attendance came from various countries and traditions — Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Thai, Tibetan, Indian and Sri Lankan. Holy chants rang out in multiple languages including Pali, the antiquated language closest to what the Buddha himself spoke.

Grace Song, an ordained minister and a department chair at the Won Institute of Graduate Studies in Warminster, Pennsylvania, said she had never been part of a peace-building event that celebrated diverse Buddhist traditions until now.

"I hope we get closer, build solidarity and support each other as we deepen our roots in this country," she said.

Khenpo Paljor, a Tibetan lama from Des Moines, Iowa, offered prayers at the Birthplace of Antioch marker erected in 1850 by the first European settlers. Here, attendees placed multi-colored Tibetan kata, which are traditional prayer scarves. Williams said the colored scarves reflect a Buddhist scripture that speaks of pure souls as colored lights shining in unison, with none canceling out the others.

For Cristina Moon, a Honolulu-based Zen priest, karmic healing is the process of changing "our relationship to what happened and the ways in which we can control

how to act in the future."

"It's important we recognize what happened and acknowledge it's uncomfortable," she said. "It's about not getting stuck in a painful past but moving forward in a positive manner."

Russell Jeung, co-founder of Stop AAPI Hate, sees these Buddhist ceremonies as Asian Americans reclaiming their traditions to recover in "the face of moral injury."

"When Trump mocked Asians and stigmatized the group by calling (COVID) 'the Chinese virus,' that really is a case of moral injury, where we as Americans are betrayed by our elected officials," Jeung said.

Hatred of the Chinese during the gold rush was fueled by political rhetoric as well. The only article that addressed a racial or ethnic group in California's constitution, which was ratified in 1879, stated that "no Chinese shall be employed on any State, county, municipal or other public work, except in punishment for crime." The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 barred Chinese laborers from immigrating.

Kaishin Victory Matsui, a priest at the Brooklyn Zen Center, said faith can be used as a way to heal the harm of racism.

"We come to these historic sites where trauma has occurred to bring peace and healing," she said. "The idea is to remember the past so it is not forgotten. This event

connects Asians across time and ethnicity, and reminds us of how vast and powerful we are."

Bhikkhunis (Buddhist nuns) Hyokeun and Hyung Jeon from the Korean Borisa Zen Center in Las Vegas, offered a white, ceramic lotus to Guan Yin during the ceremony.

"The lotus flower is sacred in Buddhism because it maintains its purity and beauty despite growing in the mud," Hyokeun said. "Hatred cannot solve hatred, only compassion can."

Tao Master Eman, a priest from the First Taoist Foundation in Arcadia, California, performed a ritual on the riverbank as participants walked silently around the block where Chinatown and its temple stood nearly 150 years ago. Eman said he called on traumatized spirits and comforted them, so they can move on to a better place.

For some like Myokei Caine-Barrett, who leads a multi-ethnic Nichiren Shu Buddhist temple in Houston, coming here was about healing her own trauma. She is half Japanese and half African American, and said her faith has given her "the foundation to claim all of myself."

"Buddhism teaches us that we cannot control how people receive us, but we can control how we respond," she said. "Not all Asians look alike, but we are all still Asian. Our goal is recognizing and respecting each other, period."

One of the attendees was Sanna Yee, who has been speaking out about anti-Asian hate since her 88-year-old grandmother, Yik Oi Huang, was fatally beaten in January 2019 in a San Francisco park. Authorities charged a then 17-year-old boy in the attack. Huang died the following year.

Yee, who offered prayers and a memorial tablet at the altar where her grandmother was memorialized, saw the event as healing.

"This is a really beautiful solution to move us into the future where we connect over shared hopes and dreams," she said.

Long-time Antioch residents viewed the event as necessary for the city to move away from its traumatic past and become more inclusive. Antioch made headlines recently after several civil rights lawsuits involving 20 plaintiffs alleged they were victims of police misconduct, excessive force and racial profiling.

Karen J. Oliver said she was horrified but not surprised to learn about how her city had mistreated Chinese immigrants.

"We all need peace and reconciliation and whatever road we can find it on, we need to take that road," she said.

Frank Sterling, who has Indigenous roots, saw the Buddhist rituals as a major step in healing the entire community.

"You can't do that until you acknowledge the past and there is a lot for us to move on from," he said. "This is a good start." MDT/AP

NORTH KOREA

Kim claims progress in developing hypersonic missile designed to strike US targets

HYUNG-JIN KIM, SEOUL

NORTH Korea successfully tested a solid-fuel engine for its new-type intermediate-range hypersonic missile, state media reported yesterday, claiming a progress in efforts to develop a more powerful, agile missile designed to strike faraway U.S. targets in the region.

A hypersonic missile is among an array of high-tech weapons systems that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un publicly vowed to introduce in 2021 to cope with what he called deepening U.S. hostility. Outside experts say Kim wants a modernized weapons arsenal to wrest U.S. concessions like sanctions relief when diplomacy resumes.

On Tuesday, Kim guided the ground jet test of the multi-stage solid-fuel engine for the hypersonic missile at the North's northwestern rocket launch facility, the official Korean Central News Agency reported.

It cited Kim as saying the strategic value of the new missile with an intermediate-range is as important as intercontinental ballistic missiles targeting the U.S. mainland and that "enemies know better about it." It said that



In this photo provided by the NK government, Kim Jong Un watches what it says a test of a solid-fuel engine for its new-type hypersonic missile at the Sohae Satellite Launching Ground, Tuesday

a timetable for completing the development of the new weapons system was "set through the great success in the important test."

Intermediate-range missiles possessed or pursued by North Korea are the weapons systems primarily aimed at attacking the U.S. Pacific territory of Guam, home to U.S. military bases. Those missile can also reach Alaska, and with a range adjustment they can be used to strike closer targets like U.S. military installations in Japan's Okinawa

island, experts say.

In recent years, North Korea has been pushing to develop more weapons with built-in solid propellants, which make launches harder to detect than liquid-propellant missiles that must be fueled before liftoffs and cannot last long. The North's pursuit of hypersonic weapons is also meant to defeat U.S. and South Korean missile defense systems, but it's unclear the North's hypersonic vehicles proved their desired speed and maneuverability

during tests in recent years, analysts say.

In January, North Korea said it flight-tested a new solid-fuel intermediate-range ballistic missile tipped with a hypersonic, maneuverable warhead, in a likely reference to the missile mentioned in yesterday's KCNA dispatch. In November, North Korea said it had tested engine tests for an intermediate-range missile but didn't say whether it's designed to carry a hypersonic warhead.

While the North's missile test

in January was likely related to the development of its first-stage rocket, this week's engine test appeared focused on the development of its second-stage rocket in part of the North's efforts to increase the weapon's flying speed, said Chang Young-keun, a missile expert at South Korea's Research Institute for National Strategy.

Chang said the latest engine test suggests North Korea could soon test-launch the new hypersonic missile.

After short-range tests with hypersonic weapons, North Korea would want to increase their ranges with maneuverable hypersonic warheads, Lee Choon Geun, an honorary research fellow at South Korea's Science and Technology Policy Institute, said. He said the capacities of the new missile can be assessed when it's test-flighted.

On Monday, South Korea, the U.S. and Japan said they detected the multiple ballistic missile test-launches by North Korea in what was the country's first missile firings in about a month. The North said Tuesday it performed a live-fire drill of what it called nuclear-capable "super-large" multiple rocket launchers designed to target South Korea's capital, Seoul. South Korea's military later said it views the North Korean weapons system tested as a ballistic missile.

North Korea has been engaging in a provocative run of missile tests since 2022. The U.S. and South Korea militaries have responded by expanding their bilateral exercises and trilateral drills involving Japan. Observers say North Korea will likely intensify its run of missile tests ahead of the U.S. presidential election in November. **MDT/AP**

SOUTH KOREA

No explosives found at Seoul following bomb threat against Ohtani

HYUNG-JIN KIM, SEOUL

SOUTH Korean police said they've found no explosives at Seoul's Gocheok Sky Dome after searching the site yesterday following a reported bomb threat against Los Angeles Dodgers star Shohei Ohtani.

About 150 police officers used sniffer dogs, X-ray detectors and other equipment to search through the stadium, but no suspicious objects were discovered, according to Seoul's Guro police station.

Police officers said they acted on a tip that there was a threat targeting the Japa-

nese star but didn't elaborate.

"It's unfortunate that the threat of a bomb even being a possibility, but I have complete confidence in Major League Baseball and the security here that we feel safe," Padres manager Mike Shildt said before the game.

Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said he didn't receive any specific information about the threat and was told to "just keep working on the baseball game."

South Korea's Yonhap news agency said the search happened after South Korea's consulate general in

Vancouver, Canada received an email threatening to detonate an explosive at the Gocheok stadium during the Major League Baseball opening game between the Dodgers and the San Diego Padres scheduled to start later yesterday. The game will mark the first MLB regular season game in South Korea.

Yonhap said the sender of the English-language email claimed to be a Japanese lawyer. Yonhap cited police as suspecting the email might have come from a person who last year allegedly sent a number of similar threats while

claiming to be a Japanese lawyer.

South Korea's Foreign Ministry didn't immediately respond to AP's requests to confirm the content of the email reportedly sent to the consulate general in Vancouver.

Police and bomb-sniffing canines were seen searching the seats and hallways of the stadium during the morning. The search did not appear to affect game preparations, with groundcrews checking the fields and K-pop performers rehearsing in the outfield.

Guro police officers said



about 350 officers will be deployed by the time the Dodgers-Padres game begins.

The Dodgers set a record with a \$700 million, 10-year contract with two-way star Ohtani and a \$325 million,

12-year deal with right-hander Yoshinobu Yamamoto and have attracted a rock star following ahead of this week's opening series against San Diego in Seoul. **MDT/AP**

USA

Biden gov't to invest \$8.5 billion in Intel's chip plants in four states

JOSH BOAK, WASHINGTON

THE Biden administration has reached an agreement to provide Intel with up to \$8.5 billion in direct funding and \$11 billion in loans for computer chip plants in Arizona, Ohio, New Mexico and Oregon.

President Joe Biden plans to talk up the investment today [Macau time] as he visits Intel's campus in Chandler, Arizona, which could be a decisive swing state in November's election. He has often said that not enough voters know about his economic policies and suggested that more would support him if they did know.

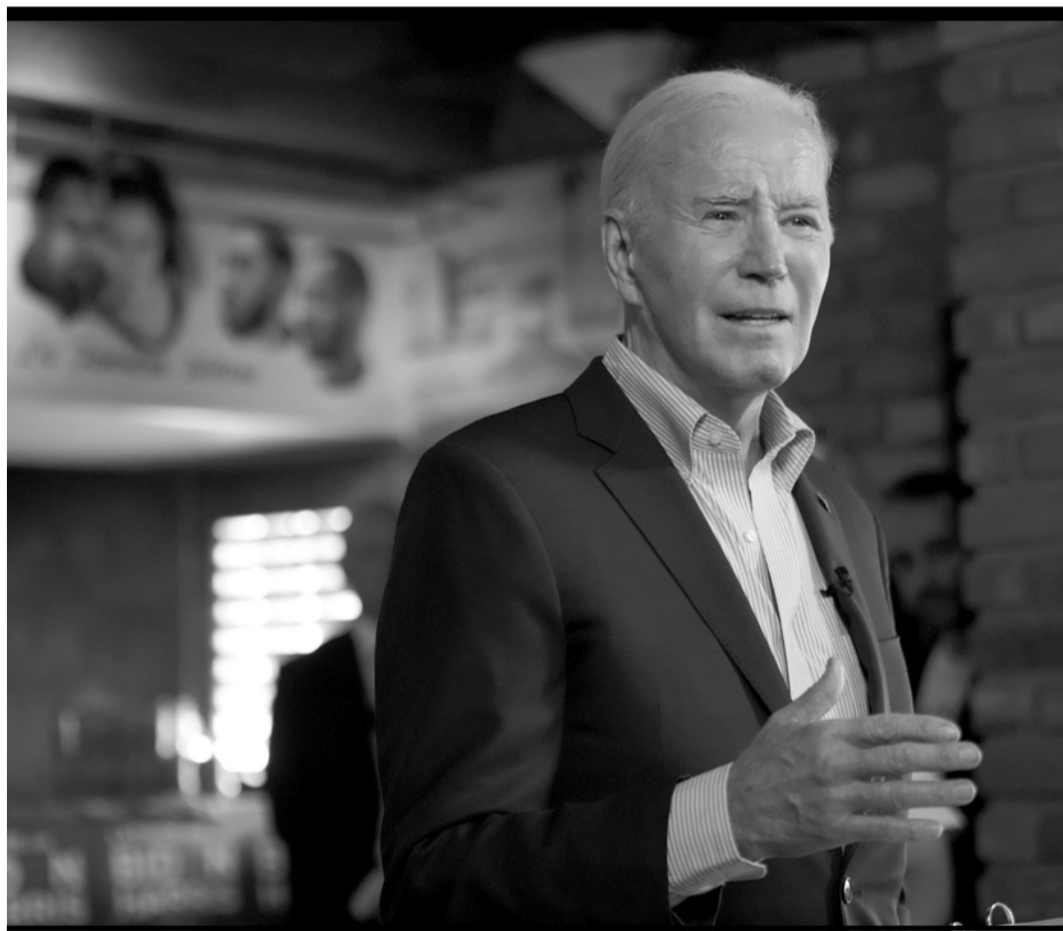
Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said the deal reached through her department would put the United States in a position to produce 20% of the world's most advanced chips by 2030, up from the current level of zero. The United States designs advanced chips, but its inability to make them domestically has emerged as a national security and economic risk.

"Failure is not an option — leading-edge chips are the core of our innovation system, especially when it comes to advances in artificial intelligence and our military systems," Raimondo said on a call with reporters. "We can't just design chips. We have to make them in America."

The funding announcement comes amid the heat of the 2024 presidential campaign. Biden has been telling voters that his policies have led to a resurgence in U.S. manufacturing and job growth. His message is a direct challenge to former President Donald Trump, the presumptive Republican nominee, who raised tariffs while in the White House and wants to do so again on the promise of protecting U.S. factory jobs from China.

Biden narrowly beat Trump in Arizona in 2020 by a margin of 49.4% to 49.1%.

U.S. adults have dim



views of Biden's economic leadership, with just 34% approving, according to a February poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs. The lingering impact of inflation hitting a four-decade high in 2022 has hurt the Democrat, who had a 52% approval on the economy in July 2021.

Intel's projects would be funded in part through the bipartisan 2022 CHIPS and Science Act, which the Biden administration helped shepherd through Congress at a time of concerns after the pandemic that the loss of access to chips made in Asia could plunge the U.S. economy into recession.

When pushing for the investment, lawmakers expressed concern about efforts by China to control Taiwan, which accounts for more than 90% of advanced computer chip production.

Ohio Sen. Sherrod Brown, a Democrat up for reelection this year, stressed that his state would become "a global leader in semiconductor manufacturing" as Intel would be generating thousands of jobs. Ohio has voted for Trump in the past two presidential elections,

and Brown in November will face Republican Bernie Moreno, a Trump-backed businessman from Cleveland.

Yesterday's announcement is the fourth and largest so far under the chips law, with the government support expected to help enable Intel to make \$100 billion in capital investments over five years. About 25% of that total would involve building and land, while roughly 70% would go to equipment, said Pat Gelsinger, CEO of Intel.

"We think of this as a defining moment for the United States, the semiconductor industry and for Intel," said Gelsinger, who called the CHIPS Act "the most critical industrial policy legislation since World War II."

The Intel CEO said on a call with reporters that he would like to see a sequel to the 2022 law in order to provide additional funding for the industry.

Biden administration officials say that computer chip companies would not be investing domestically at their expected scale without the government support. Intel funding would lead to

a combined 30,000 manufacturing and construction jobs. The company also plans to claim tax credits from the Treasury Department worth up to 25% on qualified investments.

The Santa Clara, California-based company will use the funding in four different states. In Chandler, Arizona, the money will help to build two new chip plants and modernize an existing one. The funding will establish two advanced plants in New Albany, Ohio, which is just outside the state capital of Columbus.

The company will also turn two of its plants in Rio Rancho, New Mexico into advanced packaging facilities. And Intel will also modernize facilities in Hillsboro, Oregon.

The Biden administration has also made workforce training and access to affordable child care a priority in agreements to support companies. Under the agreement with the Commerce Department, Intel will commit to local training programs as well as increase the reimbursement amount for its child care program, among other efforts. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1963 TRAIN DRIVES ITSELF



The first automatic train on the London underground could be hurtling into stations in three weeks, the government has revealed.

The trains, which operate without a driver, are currently undergoing a series of trials commissioned by the Ministry of Transport before passengers are allowed on board.

But the public has the chance to glimpse the trains today, which have cost £60,000 to test, as they are demonstrated in South Ealing, west London, by the London Transport Board.

If these final tests are successful the trains could be fully operational over a section of the district line from 8 April.

The trains work by picking up signals from coded electrical impulses from the rails which give them the intelligence to start, accelerate, coast or slow down automatically.

An operator will still be on-duty aboard the train in the motorman's cabin to survey opening and closing doors and to take charge of the train if any of the electrics fail during a journey.

Safety is maintained through a signalling system, also run on impulses from the rails, designed to halt the train if it overruns.

This system eliminates the need for fixed visual signals although some may be retained for emergency.

There are three routes which will first run the new system including the test train route operating as part of the normal service between Stamford Brook and Ravenscourt Park in west London, from 8 April, subject to Ministry of Transport approval.

From next year a fully operational route will be run between Hainault and Woodford on the Central Line along with automatic trains on the new Victoria line when it opens in 1968.

London Transport has revealed it may take between 20 to 30 years before automatic trains are introduced throughout the whole of the network.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Automatic trains were first tested on the London underground in 1962 between Stamford Brook and Ravenscourt Park after years of planning.

The Victoria Line became the first underground line in the world to be fully equipped for automatic train operation after it was opened in stages between 1968 and 1971.

It was not just the drivers who had technological replacements but a range of workers from ticket sellers to train time announcers.

In 1983 the dot matrix train destination indicator was introduced on platforms allowing passengers to see at a glance a selection of trains, with various routes arriving at stations.

And in 1987 new self-service ticket machines were introduced throughout the network - cutting back queuing times at kiosks.

In 2003 Transport for London introduced smart-cards for commuters in the capital. The new Oyster cards are contactless - meaning they do not need to be inserted into a machine and can simply be placed on top of a reader.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Listen to your heart. Navigate an obstacle with romance, family or creativity. Avoid impetuosity or impulsiveness. Withhold judgment. Take it easy. Rest and relax.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Rearrange something that's not working. Domestic projects provide satisfying results. Dig in the garden. Share something delicious with family.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Monitor the news. Changes may require adaptation. Guard against fears or impetuous action. Discuss options for potential solutions. Get creative. Share your views.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Adjust budgets around recent changes. Seek and find lucrative opportunities. Have patience with traffic or delays. Maintain momentum. Wait when necessary.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Energy surges are predicted. Don't take misfortune personally. Nurture yourself with kindness and hot water. Advocate for goodness, truth and beauty.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Stay close to home. Avoid overstimulation. You're especially productive behind closed doors. Slow to consider options and revise plans around changes.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Remember the common goal. Tempers could spark with a team effort. Do your part. Keep bargains and agreements. Prioritize planning over action.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Stay cool in a chaotic professional situation. Ignore distractions. Anticipate upcoming changes. Sidestep obstacles. Defuse tense encounters with a smile.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Explore and adventure. Engage in a fascinating investigation. Monitor conditions carefully. Obstacles and challenges could block the road. Find alternate routes and options.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

You can adapt to a financial challenge. Plan and strategize, rather than making big decisions or moves. Consider impacts to investments and long-term goals.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Keep a sense of humor with your partner. Compromise to adapt with changes. Slow to avoid accidents or errors. Patiently clarify communications. Share support.

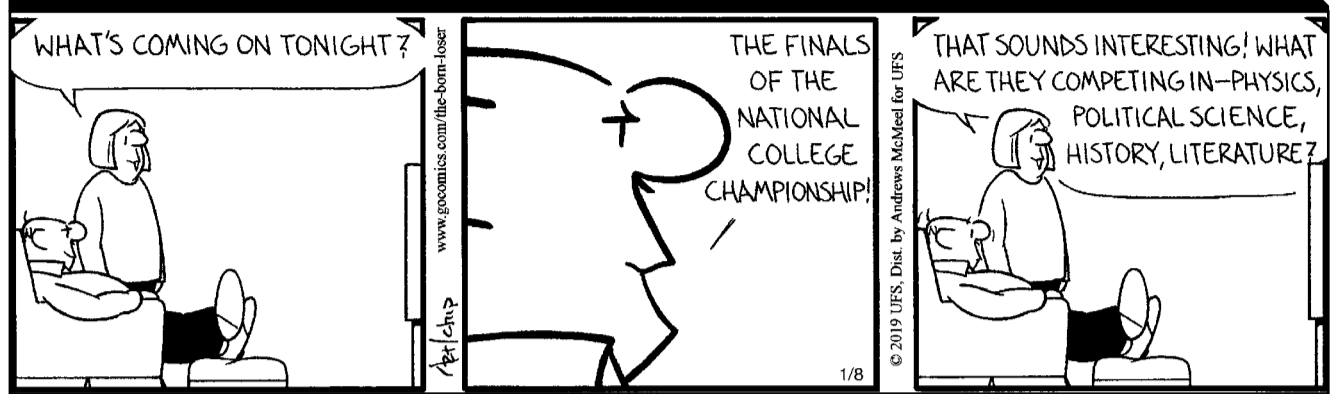


PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Slow for tricky sections. Gentle pressure and finesse work better than brute force. Nurture your health, work and fitness. Exercise energizes you. Move thoughtfully.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY				EASY+			
2		3		4		8	
		6	8			7	2
4	3		2				
	5	1	8			7	
3		2	5	9	1		6
	6		4	3		8	
			9			1	7
	7	9		1	2		
1	5			2			9

MEDIUM				HARD			
			5	4		9	
		6		2			
8			1				
1	2			8			
	3	4	7		6		
	6			9	3		
			8		7		
		5	9				
2	8	4					

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	1	16	cloudy
Changchun	-6	7	fine
Chengdu	10	22	cloudy
Chongqing	14	24	cloudy
Fuzhou	10	20	cloudy
Guangzhou	14	25	cloudy
Guiyang	9	22	fine
Haikou	19	25	cloudy
Hangzhou	8	20	cloudy
Harbin	-9	4	fine
Hefei	5	23	cloudy
Nanjing	6	20	cloudy
Shanghai	7	18	cloudy
Taipei	13	21	cloudy
Wuhan	7	22	cloudy
Hong Kong	21	21	overcast
WORLD			
Moscow	-5	5	overcast
Frankfurt	6	17	cloudy
Paris	8	18	cloudy
London	9	15	cloudy
New York	-2	6	windy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Sacramento's ___ Arena; 5- Classic autos; 9- Bee: Prefix; 12- Wander; 13- Wrong move; 15- ___ to differ; 16- Highway division; 17- ___ Kick Out of You; 18- Pebbles's pet; 19- Source; 21- Without a bend; 23- Hardy boy; 25- Vintner's prefix; 26- Vietnamese holiday; 29- Light gas; 31- Sell directly to the consumer; 35- Flamenco cry; 36- Four-door; 38- Breadth; 39- Chuck; 41- Actress Taylor; 43- ___ Nostra; 44- Great grade; 46- Cow catcher; 48- Apt. divisions; 49- Less fatty; 51- Discontinue; 52- PBS benefactor; 53- Feat; 55- Editor's mark; 57- Parting word; 61- Physicist Fermi; 65- Pack away; 66- Pave over; 68- Get one's ducks in ___; 69- Indication; 70- ___ Gras; 71- Prescribed amount; 72- Where the buoys are; 73- Not fem.; 74- Novelist Bagnold;

DOWN 1- He sang about Alice; 2- Laugh loudly; 3- Child's plea; 4- Alpha's opposite; 5- Caribou; 6- Unit of work; 7- Raw materials; 8- ___ voce (softly); 9- You're making ___ mistake!; 10- Phnom ___; 11- ___ Rhythm; 14- Harder to find; 15- Stupid; 20- Travelers' stops; 22- Alpine song; 26- Bottom line; 27- Take the honey and run; 28- Physicist Nikola; 30- Grannies; 32- Decorate; 33- "Who's there?" reply; 34- Tibet's capital; 37- Bird homes; 40- Sunset; 42- Recondite; 45- Espied; 47- Dentist's request; 50- Give guns again; 54- Fantasy; 56- Wall Street transaction; 57- Flat sound; 58- End in ___ (draw); 59- Indian exercise method; 60- Big name in razors; 62- Wrinkle remover; 63- Mozart's "___ fan tutte"; 64- Was indebted to; 67- Pitches;

Yesterday's solution

Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Emergency calls 999
- Fire department 28 572 222
- PJ (Open line) 993
- PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
- PSP 28 573 333
- Customs 28 559 944
- S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IAM 28 387 333
- Tourism 28 333 000
- Airport 59 888 88
- Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
- Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
- Telephone - Report 1000
- Electricity - Report 28 339 922
- Macau Daily Times 28 716 081



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Tou Un
HKD 2,980,000 1 bed 1 bath

Jade Garden
HKD 11,880,000 4 bed 3 bath

AP FILE PHOTO



Yurok tribal members lead a redwood canoe tour on the lower Klamath River in Klamath, California

NATURE

CALIFORNIA TRIBE THAT LOST 90% OF LAND DURING GOLD RUSH TO GET GATEWAY TO REDWOODS

JULIE WATSON

CALIFORNIA'S Yurok Tribe, which had 90% of its territory taken from it during the Gold Rush of the mid-1800s, will be getting a slice of its land back to serve as a new gateway to Redwood National and State Parks visited by 1 million people a year.

The Yurok will be the first Native people to manage tribal land with the National Park Service under a historic memorandum of understanding signed this week by the tribe, Redwood National and State Parks and the nonprofit Save the Redwoods League.

The agreement "starts the process of changing the narrative about how, by whom and for whom we steward natural lands," Sam Hodder, president and CEO of Save the Redwoods League, said in a statement.

The tribe will take ownership in 2026 of 125 acres near the tiny Northern California community of Orick in Humboldt County after restoration of a local tributary, Prairie Creek, is complete under the deal. The site will introduce visitors to Yurok customs, culture and history, the tribe said.

The area is home to the world's tallest trees — some reaching more than 350 feet. It's about a mile from the Pacific coast and adjacent to the Redwood National and State Parks, which includes one national park and three California state parks totaling nearly 132,000 acres.

The return of the land — named 'O Rew in the Yurok Language — more than a century after it was stolen from California's largest tribe — is proof of the "sheer will and perseverance of the Yurok people," said Rosie Clayburn, the tribe's cultural resources director. "We kind of don't give up."

For the tribe, redwoods are considered living beings and traditionally only fallen trees have been used to build their homes and canoes.

"As the original stewards of this land, we look forward to working together with the Redwood National and State Parks to manage it," Clayburn said. "This is work that we've always done, and continued to fight for, but I feel like the rest of world is catching up right now and starting to see that Native people know how to manage this land the best."

ANCESTRAL LAND

The property is at the heart of the tribe's ancestral land and was taken in the 1800s to exploit its old-growth redwoods and other natural resources, the tribe said. Save the Redwoods League bought the property in 2013 and began working with the tribe and others to restore it.

Much of the property was paved over by a lumber operation that worked there for 50 years and also buried Prairie Creek, where salmon would swim upstream from the Pacific to spawn.

A growing Land Back movement has been returning Indigenous homelands to the descendants of those who lived there for millennia before European settlers arrived. That has seen Native American tribes taking a greater role in restoring rivers and lands to how they were before they were expropriated.

Last week, a 2.2-acre parking lot was returned to the Ohlone people where they established the first human settlement beside San Francisco Bay 5,700 years ago. In 2022, more than 500 acres of redwood forest on the Lost Coast were returned the InterTribal Sinkyone Wilderness Council, a

group of 10 tribes.

The 'O Rew property represents just a tiny fraction of the more than 500,000 acres of the ancestral land of the Yurok, whose reservation straddles the lower 44 miles of the Klamath River. The Yurok tribe is also helping lead efforts in the largest dam removal project in U.S. history along the California-Oregon border to restore the Klamath and boost the salmon population.

Plans for 'O Rew include a traditional Yurok village of redwood plank houses and a sweat house. There also will be a new visitor and cultural center displaying scores of sacred artifacts from deerskins to baskets that have been returned to the tribe from university and museum collections, Clayburn said.

The center, which will include information on the redwoods and forest restoration, also will serve as a hub for the tribe to carry out their traditions, she said.

It will add more than a mile of new trails, including a new segment of the California Coastal Trail, with interpretive exhibits. The trails will connect to many of the existing trails inside the parks, including to popular old-growth redwood groves.

SALMON HABITAT

The tribe had already been restoring salmon habitat for three years on the property, building a meandering stream channel, two connected ponds and about 20 acres of floodplain while dismantling a defunct mill site. Crews also planted more than 50,000 native plants, including grass-like slough sedge, black cottonwood and coast redwood trees.

Coordinating stewardship throughout the entire watershed with the National Park Service and California State Parks is key to restoring these fish runs, the tribe said.

Salmon were once abundant in rivers and streams running through these redwood forests. But dams, logging, development and drought — due in part to climate change — have destroyed the waterways and threatened many of these species. Last year recreational and commercial king salmon fishing seasons were closed along much of the West Coast due to near-record low numbers of the iconic fish returning to their spawning grounds.

Thousands of juvenile coho and chinook salmon and steelhead have already returned to Prairie Creek along with red-legged frogs, northwestern salamanders, waterfowl and other species.

Redwoods National Park Superintendent Steve Mietz praised the restoration of the area and its return to the tribe, saying it is "healing the land while healing the relationships among all the people who inhabit this magnificent forest." **MDT/AP**

BOXING

Álvarez explains why he changed his mind on fighting Mexican opponents

GREG BEACHAM,
BEVERLY HILLS

FOR 13 straight bouts over seven consecutive years, Canelo Álvarez has refused to fight another Mexican. The biggest star in boxing said he respected his nation and its top talents too much to deliver any setbacks to their careers.

Álvarez has changed his mind, and the Guadalajara native will step in the ring May 4 with Tijuana's unbeaten Jaime Munguía for his latest Cinco de Mayo weekend showdown.

Álvarez has realized there's another way to show his respect for his fellow Mexican pugilists: He can occasionally give them a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to knock him off.

"Yes, I've said I don't want to fight Mexican fighters," Álvarez said yesterday [Macau time] at the Beverly Hills Hotel. "But someone respectful like Munguía, someone who has earned this fight, it's something that I'm glad

we were able to make happen. ... This is a great source of pride for me because it's Mexico all over. I'm proud of Munguía to come all the way he has."

Álvarez (60-2-2, 39 KOs) and Munguía (43-0, 34 KOs) will meet in Las Vegas for the undisputed super middleweight title. Álvarez has held all four major belts at the weight since 2021, while Munguía only moved up to 168 pounds last year.

But the 27-year-old Munguía has been looking up to the 33-year-old Álvarez for his entire pro career. The fighters shook hands and interacted courteously throughout their promotional appearance in the hotel's famed Crystal Ballroom.

"There's a lot of respect, and I think everybody knows that," Munguía said through a translator. "It might divide the fans, but at the end, it's good for Mexico. Because no matter who you like, it's going to be a fight for all of Mexico."

Álvarez hasn't fought a Mexi-

can opponent since May 2017, when he won every round in a thrashing of infamous nepo baby Julio César Chávez Jr.

Canelo has fought only three Mexican opponents in his last 37 bouts since April 2009, when Álvarez was becoming big enough to get a measure of control in choosing his foes.

Álvarez is now in complete control, with every fighter from 147 pounds to heavyweight seemingly angling for the biggest opponents' paydays in the sport. The bout will be the first all-Mexican matchup for a major world title at any weight above 160 pounds.

Freddie Roach, Munguía's trainer, called it "the biggest fight in the world right now."

"This is all about making history," Álvarez said. "I want my legacy to be about making the greatest fights possible. That's what I want to continue doing: Defend my belt and bring the greatest fights to the fans."

While boxing searches for new



Undisputed super middleweight champion Canelo Alvarez (left) poses with boxer Jaime Munguía during a news conference in Beverly Hills

revenue streams and weathers the eternal promotional squabbles that habitually hinder the sport's best matchups, a fight with Álvarez is still a golden ticket to worldwide exposure and more mo-

ney than most fighters can make anywhere else. Mexican and Mexican-American fans also are the engine driving the sport in North America, increasing the spotlight on their favorite fighters. MDT/AP

廖國敏
LIO KUOKMAN

指揮廖國敏懷揣著遠大的志向，為他故鄉的樂團描繪出一幅宏偉的藍圖

TALENTED MAESTRO LIO KUOKMAN HAS AMBITIOUS PLANS FOR HIS HOMETOWN ORCHESTRA

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OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

REINFORCEMENT OF RULE OF LAW IN HK

Hong Kong lawmakers unanimously passed a bill mandated by Article 23 of the Basic Law of Hong Kong on Tuesday, which will take effect on Saturday.

By fulfilling a constitutional obligation, the move marks the city taking another key step forward in plugging the loopholes in its legal system that had long been used by some to threaten national security in the city.

The bill, also known as Safeguarding National Security Ordinance, seeks to prohibit five acts that endanger national security while updating provisions within existing laws. It was the unrest that convulsed Hong Kong in 2019, which was orchestrated by external forces with the help of their local pawns, that prompted the legislative and executive bodies of the special administrative region to accelerate the drafting and review procedures of the bill. Only 50 days separated the start of the public consultation and Tuesday's passing of the bill.

While some China-bashers in the United States have tried to find fault with the short time it took for the bill to complete all the procedures, they simply ignore that US Congress passed the Patriot Act within just three days after its introduction following the terrorist attacks on Sept 11, 2001.

It is the implementation of Hong Kong's national security law since 2020 and the series of executive and electoral system reforms that followed that have paved the way for the smooth passage of the bill. By denying the external forces' proxies having a seat in the city's legislature and government departments, they have not been able to have the bill shelved. The efficiency with which the bill passed the mandatory reviews demonstrates the previous efforts to bring the SAR from chaos to order have paid off.

Some lawmakers have called the drafting of the bill, and the readings of and debates on it as a homework delayed for more than 20 years since it was first proposed, and have described the process as being of "high quality, high-score-deserved, and strictly in accordance with the legislative procedures", which featured clause-by-clause scrutiny, positive interactions and efficient deliberations between the legislative and executive branches of the SAR. The lawmakers raised many questions concerning the bill, citing almost all public concerns, which have been appropriately addressed.

Thanks to these endeavors, the bill clearly defines national security, and the criteria for the acts that can be recognized as endangering national security. Basically, the bill is expected to uphold the law, order, security and safety in Hong Kong. That not only reflects the common will of people in Hong Kong but also can provide a boost for Hong Kong's productive interaction with the rest of the world. The normal business, financial, logistics, cultural, social and people-to-people exchanges between Hong Kong and the world will only be encouraged and better protected by the bill. By providing clear legal guidelines and strong protection for people's lives, property, freedom and rights, the bill will be conducive to maintaining the city's unique advantages and status as an international financial, business and logistics center.

It is essential for lawmakers to thoroughly explain to the public in detail the legislative intent behind individual clauses, the risks to national security they aim to address and how the clauses will be applied in practice in the future so that cooperation between Hong Kong and the world can be carried out following more predictable, transparent and clear rules.

CAMBODIA'S PRIME MINISTER SOUNDS A SOUR NOTE ON TRUCKS' MUSICAL HORNS

THE BUZZ

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet has ordered a ban on musical horns, after videos posted on social media showed people dancing on roads and roadsides as passing trucks blasted rhythmic little tunes.

Hun Manet, who last year took over the wheel of government from his father, Hun Sen — who led Cambodia for 38 years — called on the Ministry of Public Works and Transportation and police across the country to immediately take action against any vehicle whose normal horn has been replaced by a tune-playing one by ripping it out and restoring the standard honking type. He said the measure has

already been implemented by provincial authorities, but he wanted to announce it publicly to make sure it was enforced nationwide.

He commented on his Facebook page this week that recent social media posts had shown "inappropriate activity committed by some people, especially youth and children, dancing on the roadside to the musical sounds from trucks' horns."

Hun Manet said such dancing affects public order and poses a traffic hazard that is a threat to life and limb, not least of all to the dancers themselves.

For Cambodians, there will be no more dancing in the street.



TALL ORDER

NEWSPAPER SAYS VIDEO OF PRINCE WILLIAM AND KATE SHOULD HALT ROYAL RUMOR MILL

JILL LAWLESS & SYLVIA HUI, LONDON

THE late Queen Elizabeth II used to say that the royal family has to be seen to be believed.

That became glaringly evident as the absence of Kate, the Princess of Wales, from public view unleashed an escalating frenzy of wild speculation, skepticism and flat-out conspiracy theories fueled by online armchair detectives.

It's unlikely to let up even though Kate and husband Prince William have reportedly been filmed at a farm shop near their Windsor home — the first footage of the 42-year-old princess since she had abdominal surgery for an unspecified condition two months ago.

The Sun newspaper plastered its front page with "Great to see you again, Kate!" and said it had decided to publish the footage "in a bid to bring an end to what the Palace has called the 'madness of social media.'"

But that probably won't stem the tide of feverish and at times fantastical speculation that has swirled about the princess's condition during her absence.

"The potency and legitimacy of monarchy comes from visibility," said Anna

Whitelock, professor of history of the monarchy at London's City University. "Visibility is the 'contract' between a monarch and their people."

Evidence of that lies in the steady stream of photos of King Charles III meeting dignitaries and officials released by the palace since the monarch announced in February that he is being treated for an unspecified form of cancer. Charles' relative openness about his diagnosis was a departure for the generally secretive royal family.

Kate has not been as open, or as successful, at controlling the narrative.

Palace officials gave little detail about Kate's condition beyond saying that it wasn't cancer-related, the surgery was successful and recuperation will keep Kate away from public duties until after Easter. That's likely to mean she'll be out of sight until her children go back to school on April 17.

Experts who study conspiracy theories say the snowballing conjecture surrounding Kate isn't so different from how dozens of other "nonstandard beliefs" gain momentum.

"The moment there's an information gap, people will fill it. And they can fill

that space quite quickly ... when we have such a fast-moving mediascape," said Simeon Yates, a professor of digital culture at the University of Liverpool.

Speculation didn't stop after William and Kate's Kensington Palace office released a photo of Kate and her children George, Charlotte and Louis on March 10 to coincide with Mother's Day in the U.K. The move backfired when The Associated Press and other news agencies retracted the picture from publication because it appeared to have been manipulated, fueling even more conjecture.

Although there was no suggestion the image was fake, inconsistencies such as the alignment of Princess Charlotte's left hand from publication because it appeared to have been manipulated, fueling even more conjecture.

Kate issued a statement acknowledging she liked to "experiment with editing" and apologizing for "any confusion" the photo had caused.

The manipulated photo set off a new round of speculation, some of it centered on unsubstantiated theories that the image wasn't recent or that Kate had been photoshopped in — alongside even more bizarre claims. **MDT/AP**

Indonesia A wooden boat carrying dozens of Rohingya Muslims capsized about 25 km from the coastline of Kuala Bubon beach in Indonesia's northernmost province of Aceh yesterday. Local fishermen rescued six of the refugees and moved them to a temporary shelter. There were no immediate reports of casualties. About 740,000 Rohingya were resettled in Bangladesh to escape the brutal counterinsurgency campaign by security forces in Myanmar.



Gaza Strip Mourners held funeral prayers yesterday morning outside a hospital in central Gaza for 28 people killed in three separate Israeli airstrikes on urban refugee camps the previous night. AP footage showed mourners praying over the bodies, which were wrapped in funeral shrouds, before the bodies were taken away in donkey carts for burial. As fighting rages on in Gaza, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu says he is determined to carry out a Rafah ground offensive.



England Freddie Mercury's sanctuary in London, where he lived the last decade of his life, is on sale for the first time in nearly half a century — minus his "exquisite clutter." Garden Lodge, as the neo-Georgian brick home in the posh Kensington neighborhood is known, is for sale by Knight Frank for offers exceeding 30 million pounds (\$38 million). It is not publicly listed. He reportedly paid cash for the property, which was listed for more than 500,000 pounds.

Brazil As Jair Bolsonaro's term wound down in the final days of December 2022, he had decided to skip the ritual of handing over the presidential sash to his successor, and instead made plans to travel abroad. Bolsonaro turned to his aide-de-camp and asked him to insert false data into the public health system to make it appear as though he and his 12-year-old daughter had received the COVID-19 vaccine, according to an indictment.